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Environment and sustainable development: sustainable mountain development

Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Letter dated 17 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the conclusions of the First Global Meeting of Members of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions, that was held in Merano, Italy, on 5 and 6 October 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 94 (g) and 95.

(*Signed*) Marcello **Spatafora**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

First Global Meeting of Members of the Mountain Partnership
Merano (Italy), October 5-6, 2003

Conclusions

The Members of the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions (thereafter referred to as the Mountain Partnership, MP) met, at the invitation of the Italian Government, for their First Global Meeting in Merano, Italy, October 5-6, 2003.

In the course of their exchanges of views, the participants recalled:

- the fundamental importance of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 "Managing Fragile Ecosystems – Sustainable Mountain Development", adopted by the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992);
- the UNGA Resolutions relevant to the International Year of Mountains 2002, i.e. 53/24 of November 10, 1998, 55/189 of December 20, 2000 and 57/245 of January 30, 2003;
- the Bishkek Global Mountain Platform of November 1, 2002;
- the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), and in particular its Paragraph 42 addressing sustainable mountain development;
- the Basic Concept Document of the Mountain Partnership ('Bali Document'), which defines the International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions;
- the CSD 11 Decision, in particular paragraphs 22-24 on partnerships;
- the Report of the Secretary General of the UN prepared for the 58th United Nations General Assembly, describing achievements made at the national, regional and international level in the framework of the International Year of Mountains 2002;
- the Mountain Partnership Guiding Principles prepared by the task-force in preparation for the Merano Conference;

The participants confirmed their commitment to the Partnership and their willingness to promote its innovative, transparent, flexible, participatory and dynamic characters; the participants will thus pursue the objective of fostering actions at all levels to protect mountain environments and support mountain livelihoods through the integration of the environmental, economic and social components of sustainable mountain development.

The meeting reconfirmed that the Mountain Partnership is open to all governments, including local and regional authorities, as well as intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations whose objectives and activities are consistent with the vision and mission of the Mountain Partnership and who fulfill the criteria for membership;

The participants noted that the nature of the Mountain Partnership as an umbrella alliance does not require a complex governance mechanism;

The meeting recalled the need for a common and easily accessible secretariat to provide services to the members, essentially to help them to network, to provide them with knowledge management support and to assist them as a broker in view of facilitating the development and the funding of initiatives, following principles of cost-efficiency, solidarity and equity. In this context, the participants welcomed the offer of the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to host the secretariat, as well as the offer of the Mountain Forum to provide communication and networking services.

The participants also underlined the need to adequately integrate environmental concerns in the work and activities of the Partnership, and the catalytic role UNEP can play in this regard.

The meeting noted that, while its primary institutional relations are with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the Mountain Partnership is aimed to act in synergy with a variety of stakeholder groups, including civil society, regional and other Multilateral Organizations having a specific mandate in the area of the sustainable development of mountain regions and to forge linkages with existing multilateral and other relevant instruments, also to avoid duplication of existing activities.

The participants decided to continue the process of implementation of the Partnership in full compliance with the CSD XI decision, and to this end:

- To mandate the existing open-ended Task Force established to prepare the Merano meeting to continue its work towards the complete establishment of the Partnership, and to report to the members by the next meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development; the Task Force should focus on the following areas:
    - To define criteria for membership in the Mountain Partnership and responsibilities of members;
    - To examine the issue of the future governance of the Mountain Partnership, based on principles, such as democratic participation of all members, responsibility and solidarity, transparency and accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency;
    - To define ways to allow the Mountain Partnership to function as a promoter for joint initiatives based on paragraph 42 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, facilitating contacts between countries and institutions in view of joint activities and creating conditions for cooperation and resource mobilization at national, regional and global level;
- To invite all members to submit their views to the Task Force in this regard.
- To foster consultation among all members, essentially by means of e-contacts and, when necessary face-to-face meetings.
- To review by the end of 2004 the structure and organization of the secretariat in a longer term perspective.

A full report of the Meeting will be produced and made available to all members of the Mountain Partnership.

The Meeting also invited all member countries of the Mountain Partnership to strive to get a resolution on sustainable mountain development adopted by the 58th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The participants agreed to arrange an action-oriented meeting of the Partnership in conjunction with the upcoming 12th session of the Commission of Sustainable Development.

The members also agreed to hold the second global meeting of the Mountain Partnership during the second semester 2004, and welcomed in this context the offer of the government of Peru to host this meeting.

The Members of the Partnership express their appreciation to the Italian and Swiss Governments, to the Mountain Forum and FAO for their efforts in preparing the meeting and the gratitude to the Italian Government and the local authorities of Bolzano, Merano and Verona for their hospitality.